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The Seed Sower.

A Magazine for the Church, the School, and the Home.

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To Our Readers.

The *Seed Sower* enters upon its fourth year amid many signs of encouragement and with a host of friends. We are constantly receiving the most kind and appreciative letters as to the value of our venture, together with the assurance that our seed sowing is not in vain. One honoured correspondent, who bears a well-known name in our churches, writes: "I look forward to the monthly visit of the *Seed Sower* with a pleasing hope which is never disappointed. It is the best pennyworth we publish, and I wish it increasing success." It need scarcely be said that we shall make every effort to maintain the high standard we have aimed at in the past. Our list of contributors for the past year is an ample guarantee of future quality. Among others will be found the names of the Revds. Dr. Martineau, Dr. Drummond, J. E. Carpenter, M.A., J. E. Odgers, M.A., C. B. Upton, B.A., Stopford A. Brooke, M.A., C. Hargrove, M.A., H. Gow, B.A., E. Fripp, B.A., A. Bennett, M.A., Harold Johnson, Miss Cobbe, etc., etc. We shall spare no pains to make the *Seed Sower* a worthy organ of Liberal thought and spiritual life. Each number will contain a sermon by one of our leading ministers, articles of both denominational and general interest, something for the children, and matters of interest to our churches. There will also be a series of articles by Mr. Wood on Ruskin's "Seven Lamps of Architecture." Will not our friends help us by securing an increased circulation? Orders should be sent to MR. ARNOLD WOOD, 35, PARADISE STREET, BIRMINGHAM. Subscriptions for the year, including postage, One Shilling and Sixpence. Special terms for churches taking 50 or more copies. The *Seed Sower* can easily be adapted as a congregational magazine.

The Divine Method of Vindication.

A SERMON BY THE
REV. STOPFORD A. BROOKE, M.A.

"*And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?*

"*I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?*"—LUKE xvii., 7-8.

This was the parable which Christ spake in order that men should always pray and not faint. If we would understand it, we must connect it with the preceding discourse. That discourse relates the terrors and troubles which fill a nation when a judgment falls upon it. They tell the story in Christ's mind of the future of Jerusalem, as Isaiah and Jeremiah told the story of the coming fall of Egypt or of Tyre; as Savonarola told what was to happen to Florence; as many told what was to happen to the French Empire. It was no supernatural foretelling. It was a declaration based on eternal laws of right and wrong, known to men who live close to the heart of God—laws as certain to fulfil themselves as the laws of the physical universe. If a nation gets into a certain state of life, or of death, its salvation is accomplished or its doom is sealed; and, according to the degree of moral death or moral life in a nation, so is the degree of punishment that it receives or of good fruit that it brings forth. It is not the best artillery which wins in the end the battle, it is the obedience of the nation to the laws of national being. And when Jesus looked at Jerusalem, he knew its fate. The carcase was there—dead corruption; therefore, the vultures came. And well it is for the world, when a nation is corrupt, that the

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vultures should sweep upon it and scavenge it, for it is just at such a time that the dead nation is most proud, most careless, most full of that death-dancing and vile luxury which men call life; eating and drinking, drenched with lust and money, and the pride of their corruption; eaten to the core with dishonesty and speculation; rich above and splendid, poor and starving below—the state that France was in before that awful time when her sun was darkened, and her moon turned to blood, and when all the stars from her heaven fell—the state that England seems to be always verging towards, but from which she is saved by the resurrection of her conscience again and again—the state on which, as Jesus said, when the judgment comes it comes swift as the lightning. Those who see this coming, those who suffer from the evils that ensure and create the judgment, cry out of their pain—"Lord, how long?"—and as the judgment delays, as years go by and no help comes, they begin to despair, to cease to have that perseverance in faith and in the works of faith which is the loftiest form of prayer: that prayer which is the offering up of the whole life to God in sacrifice for Man—that form which Christ meant here when he used the words—"always to pray and not to faint." To such—whether their prayer was the inmost endurance of the soul in personal doubt and difficulty on the righteousness of God, the holding fast to Him in the darkness that shrouded Him; or that incessant labour of outward life against evil which is based on faith in eternal good, and its inevitable victory—this parable of Christ's, after its warning to persevere, brought a message also of consolation. The answer to their faith might seem to delay, but in reality was speedy; nay, frequently was already given, though they did not see it. There was no delay which was not necessary for the development of the individual, and for the just growth of the world. The delay is only apparent: the speed is real, and the end certain. When the hour has come, the fidelity of God answers to the prayerful life of man, and the vindication of eternal Right stands clear before mankind.

There is one attitude for men and nations in these days of pain; it is unfainting prayer—the intensity of the whole life set towards faith in God and that He will hear our call, praying and not fainting.

Take two examples of this in the personal experience of life. There are times when a man has gone on smoothly for years; riches increasing, and the desire of them, so that all his powers have been given to the world. In the dominance of the present, the life of God in his own soul has been forgotten, and to live for man in God forgotten also, so that all that Christ means here by prayer does not exist at all within him. And now he retires to rest, and luxury is at his heart, and all his life sinks towards sloth and ease. All of a sudden, he gets his warning. He is told in some clear fashion, that he is all wrong—that he must not choose to live only for the world. It is a fierce hour of his life; and in the struggle, he must gird himself to pray and not to faint. Or else he turns to the world and chooses that. It is an easy choice; he gets no trouble, no discomfort at all about it; but death begins with him, and his inner life, like the carcase of which Christ speaks, becomes corrupt. O! take the trouble and win true life. Remember the old story of Jacob. It may be legend, but it is alive with human truth. He had lived an active, pushing life, marked by cunning speculation, all absorbed in getting wealth, it did not much matter how—just like many a merchant, many a professional man of the present day. At last, he has secured his fortune, and he leaves business. It is the time for rest, and one would say, for thought and retrospect. But there is no awaking to life in him; the world is all around his heart. Left to himself, he would have gone on sinking into deeper carelessness of the true life, into a deeper fit of baseness, into deeper forgetfulness of God. But, there is a Spirit that strives with man. In the very height of his ease, he hears that the thunder-cloud from which he had fled, is coming, dark, up the Heavens. Esau is at hand with 400 men; the deceived to reckon with the deceiver. Natural enough, that seems! Yes, but in its effect on Jacob—the inward awakening—there you may see the spiritual. The natural event is turned by the Spirit of God in Jacob's heart into the true supernatural. He is awakened from the dream of wealth, and forced into the actual world, into the true realities! All his past, even Esau, wholly disappears.

What is this, cries Jacob? What does this mean—and you know the voice is your own, in many a circumstance of life when the outward

blow has awakened the inner life—is this only Esau who is troubling me, or beneath it, is there One who is knocking at my heart? Is it the God of my Fathers, Him whom I have forgotten so long, who has come to make inquisition into my life?

In the dead midnight the answer comes. It *is* God come to judgment. Then from Jacob's mind vanishes all thought of the outward, and the man is moved, shaken to his centre. The flame of God, which itself is light, reveals while it consumes the evil in the past, and Jacob's one agony now is to redeem himself from that dead life, and to find God and know Him as He is, that he may know what it is to live. And in the agony, what to him then are goods and wealth and all he cared for?—dust and ashes, so fierce and winnowing is the wind of the Spirit when it begins to blow.

Then, what is the temper of the soul? Why, passionate perseverance in prayer; no voice, no words, no kneeling down, but the wrestling of the whole nature in concentrated power all the night long with the Spirit whom he had forgotten—praying and not fainting—the set tension of thought towards the realising of God. At last, the answer comes—no promise of deliverance from Esau — but a revelation of God's character, and a change in his own character; no longer the supplanter, who thought only of getting the better of men for his own advantage, but the Prince with God—the princely heart which wished to give and love, and not to receive and take.

It is the one change which it would be worth all the loss of all your wealth, time after time, to gain. Better you should be a beggar, than not to have it and be wealthy. Better any poverty, any outcast life, better starvation with love and the unworldly spirit within; better than half a million a year and a heart which has grown hard, a soul that only cares for the things the world cares for, a life lived after the common maxims of society, and proud of the vulgarities of fashion —forms of death in which the great mass of the world think they live. Anything is better than the damnation of belonging only to the world. And if God sweeps down upon you in loss, fear, disease, torment of heart, and makes you feel, as Jacob felt, that you must change your whole nature—why, if you cannot thank Him now, the time will come when you will say—"I worked hard for the world and for myself for many years, I have had my reward in corruption, but the best work I ever did was when praying and not fainting I lost the world and found my God."

Take another instance. Job, unlike Jacob, had lived in prosperity and been untainted with it. Everything, however, of Job's was lost in a week; no uncommon thing to-day. The righteous man is flung down into bereavement, poverty, horrible disease. Then came the question, forced like a cruel sword into his vitals—"Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? if so, verily I have cleansed my heart *in vain*, and washed my hands in innocency." "Shall I deny him—shall I say, There is no Omnipotent Father, or he would not do this, no eternal justice or love, or this cruel injustice were not accomplished?" It is what is said all round us at the present day; there are people who seriously think they have brought an argument against Christianity, when they have shown forth the suffering of the good and poor, and the prosperity of the wicked or of the rich. That may be an argument against Theism. It is none against Christianity. Christ lived and died to show that such suffering borne in love was true life, and that it redeemed the wicked and the prosperous from their dreadful life of materialism—that life which a certain class of Socialists wish to impose on the poor, under the impression that increased material comfort is all they want in life.

Yet Job did not stay in that imagination. "No," thought he, "God must be right. This which is done, I do not understand, but I will not believe that He is wrong. Nothing in the world will make me say that Justice is not at the Helm of the Universe; nothing which I suffer will make me believe that there is no righteousness behind the suffering." But he does not lie down patiently under it. The patience of Job was not silent or unimpassioned endurance. His patience was in the desperate perseverance which never rested till he had worked out his problem. It was impatient patience. His soul appears like the widow before the judge, incessantly importunate, full of indignant complaints, bitter cries for death, stern, audacious, violent questionings, challenges to God to vindicate Himself before His servant's eyes, challenges to God to declare

that though Job was suffering, his suffering did not mean guilt. "Yet—make me guilty, show me where I am sinful, provided Thou be righteous. And thou art! In spite of all that seems to deny it, I will maintain Thy righteousness and my own. Thou wilt vindicate me, because thou must vindicate Thyself. I know that my Vindicator liveth."

That is—in such hours—to pray and not to faint. It is prayer to cling with the whole force of one's being to God, when God is not to be seen and seems dead; in passionate trust that He must be right. "All is dark. On the right hand, on the left, I seek Him, the everlasting righteousness, and I cannot find Him. But He must answer at last; He must speak and clear my cause." This is the Kingdom of Heaven suffering violence, and the violent taking it by force. It is the prayer that conquers, because it faints not.

And it did conquer, but in no arbitrary way; nor was any spiritual miracle wrought. Faith which makes a man despise himself for giving up the battle, is of course at the root of prayer like this; is its efficient and silent cause; and such fear of self-contempt is courage. He who believes in eternal justice and love, cannot lose animation, eagerness, audacity, cannot be beaten in life. He may be stunned, he may be half dead with the wounds of life, stricken of heart in the lonely desert; yet he is sure to start into energy the moment he sees the sunlight or feels the breeze of a new impulse.

The meanest thing of all does not happen to him. He does not crouch like a beaten hound beneath the whip of life, and say—"There is nothing more to do or feel—I do not care what happens. There is no God, and no good, nothing worthy, nothing beautiful." On the contrary, after the storm of savage complaint and savage faith, the glory of the Universe, and of Humanity, and of God, from whom all the glory comes, first steals, then rushes upon him. He sees mankind at work over all the world, the heavens and the earth the work of God's hands, the moon and the stars that He has ordained. To him, as to Job, are unrolled all the glories of creation, of God above, of man within it. He sees and admires, rejoices, humbles, and forgets himself. "In all this mighty glory of the whole, my little grief is nought. Nay, it is part of the glory, could I but only see it." Yes, it is not in wailing, but in understanding that what is taken from us is given to all, and can only be found and claimed by us, when it is searched for in the whole, and claimed by us, as part of the whole—that all grief and passionate anger finds answer to that silent, inward, passionate cry which streams unceasingly, though voiceless, from the innermost recesses of the soul in suffering.

What then is the coming of Christ to the soul in these hours of sorrow, and doubt, and passion? You think it will be a miracle—the sudden influx of peace, the sudden rush of joy, such triumphant faith given to you, that you cannot sorrow more, or doubt again, or sin again.

The coming of Christ to your soul is nothing of the kind, and you do not get what you have not worked for. No miracle is wrought within any more than without. Good of this kind, faith of this kind, strength of this kind, is only the fruit of long continued work—nothing is given which will save you from the personal exertion needed for your character; but over some one desire the spirit breathes, some one faculty is, as it were, reborn in the Bethlehem within, and slowly the fire in these inflames the other desires and powers in your nature, and you are set upon the way to that higher life. Incessantly I hear people saying—"Why does not God make me good at once, heal my sorrow instantly, remove my doubts upon the spot." I tell you there are no miracles of this kind wrought, least of all for you who ask these things so lazily. Sloth is at the bottom of these cries. The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation.

And here, in the big world, it is the same. Men look at the suffering of their fellow-men; at the poor ground down by the rich; at the rich wearied of the poor; at the bodily and moral torture of so many; at the miseries of England—greatest of all, perhaps, in London. They hear the cry of the starved and neglected—"Lord, how long?" and they are indignant at God not answering at once. "There is no God," they shout, "or if He exist, He is a tyrant, who does not listen to the cries of men." These are asking, like the Scribes and Pharisees in Christ's day, a sign, a miracle; demanding, in fact, that very thing which when they are meddling in science they are so anxious to deny.

It were better to be a little consistent. The answer to the cry—How long? will not come in that way—not by miracle, not in outward show, not with thundering speed, not by force—but in some quiet fashion, which will be bitterly spoken against, despised by the mass of folk, and rejected, laughed at by the world, looked upon as illogical and ridiculous by the philosophers, but which will go on its quiet way, inspiring and stirring hearts, until at last, it will overcome, and the work be done. But they who began it will be gone from earth.

That was what happened long ago. The answer to the agonized prayers of the world for light and deliverance was the coming of Jesus Christ. And when people high up in society, or the stormier spirits who resented the oppression of the Roman rule, heard the reply, they burst out into scornful laughter. And many say now—as Scribe, and Pharisee, and even Apostle said—that the answer he gave was no answer. They want something else—miraculous deliverance, the sudden overthrow of the priesthood and the ruling class, the resurrection of Jerusalem.

You may get that kind of reply from revolutions wrought by men who in the end become tyrants, but you will never get that kind of reply from God. His answer is the sending of ideas among men, through prophets, which, when wrought out, and fought out, will regenerate the world. In the working out of these, hundreds upon hundreds will perish and give up their lives for the race and the truths that are to come. It was in this way that Jesus looked at the problem of the world, but it is a way in which, at the present day, hardly any one, as far as I can judge, chooses to look at history. It would be a cynical way for God to reply, if all who perish and suffer in the fighting were to perish for ever. But if their sixty years here is followed by continued and progressive life, they may well spare these years for the battle and the pain which ennoble them and improve the whole of Humanity.

Yes, if immortality be true, the answer is not cynical, but the very best that can be given, because in this way mankind is set to educate itself, is not made good by force, is not redeemed by Imperialism. Why! man ought to rejoice in a God who has so much respect for his individual growth, and who refuses to pauperize his intellect, or his conscience, or his spirit by doing everything for them by miracles, by lifting him into an angel in a moment. No, God has redeemed men by sending them ideas through Jesus. Ever since Christ's time his ideas have been at work on mankind, and Jesus himself was glad, as we should be, to die for them.

And now, what do you expect? "Lord, how long?" cry the poor, the neglected, and the starving. "Where is God?" cries the Atheist, "Let Him come and help, let him send down from on high and deliver, else he does not exist." Nothing of that kind will occur.

But certain ideas, growing up in a few men, will begin to take root in mankind, and there will be men seized with them; the ideas will be developed through suffering, and at last take practical form; and when their prophets have died for them or in them, they will be in the world like fire in a forest. They will show their presence by a few scattered sparks, left perhaps by one man in his passing through great cities. After the night is spent the fire will spring out of the smouldering embers, and the tree out of which the little flame began will burn till a single column of fire breathes towards the sky. Then the nearest tree will be inflamed, and another and another, till at last a leaping conflagation will spread itself all over England, in which not men but ancient and evil institutions will be consumed, and the face of the world be changed. That is the way the deliverance will come slowly, but accelerating. But when it first comes—in its beginning—who will believe it? Why, scarcely any one—"Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" And he who brings it will often say with Christ—half in sadness and half in grim irony—"Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith in the earth?"

MIDLAND CHRISTIAN UNION.—ANNUAL SERMON AND MEETINGS.—Since our last issue Dr. Hunter has been compelled to alter the day of his visit to Birmingham from Tuesday, March 17th, to Monday, March 16th. The business meeting, conference, and sermon will therefore be held on Monday, March 16th. We refer our readers to our advertising pages for further particulars.

My Faith in Christ.

[*The following article by a well-known woman in the literary world will be read with much interest, dealing as it does with a question of immense importance.*]

There is a leaven, I believe, working within the Unitarian body which is still a secret and unacknowledged influence, but is possibly destined to alter and remodel it by a new, or, at least, a changed faith. This influence finds some voice, to my ear, in utterances by the Rev. L. P. Jacks and the Rev. A. A. Charlesworth, which have lately been published in the *Seed Sower*. This is the light in which some are growing to regard the position of Christ as a personality to us.

There is a sound of cant which repels many of us in the frequent repetition of that saying, to "preach Christ only;" and our fear of giving him the supreme place in religion which we believe belongs to God the Father alone, our rejection of the grosser form of supernaturalism, make us, perhaps, shrink from defining what is at the same time a truth to us, our secret feeling for Jesus as Leader, Helper, Master (in a different sense from the Evangelical), as also Saviour and Redeemer.

Many of our ministers insist in season and out of season on the "mere man" theory. To my mind this is as untenable as the God-man worship; neither position, it appears to me, will satisfactorily account for the unique point above Humanity on which Christ stands.

If I—Unitarian born and bred, yet not at one with the advanced Unitarianism of the day, which to my mind does not in any way differ from Theism—endeavour to put my own belief in Christ into words, it may possibly help others also to define theirs.

First, what I do *not* believe; it is better to dispose of the negatives to begin with, and so clear the ground. I do *not* believe that Jesus' birth was in any respect unlike the birth of any other man upon our earth. I do *not* believe that he was "conceived by the Holy Ghost," "born of the Virgin Mary," but of an ordinary Galilean couple under the ordinary conditions. I do *not* believe—because I cannot see that God would have served any end by so endowing him—that he was endowed with a power over life and death, though I do believe that he could heal afflicted bodies and souls by a natural, not supernatural, power.

I do *not* believe that the Resurrection was a bodily one, though I believe that there was a spiritual appearance granted to the disciples, who were thereby strengthened and encouraged to maintain the Christian faith in the face of the obvious and terrible disaster and failure which otherwise would have been enough to extinguish it for a time.

I do *not* believe that his death was for any mysterious purpose an Atonement or Propitiation of God—God being in absolute sympathy with him, and not in any point antagonistic.

I do *not* believe that any rite or sacrament is now necessary to carry on that sacrifice of perfect obedience.

Finally, I believe in the Unity, and not the Trinity—that the Father stands alone, supreme, mysterious,—that the terms God the Son and God the Holy Ghost, unless taken in a metaphysical sense, are meaningless.

Now as to what I do believe.

First, I hold, as those of the orthodox Church maintain, that God needs an interpreter between His awful mystery—infinite, eternal, incomprehensible, and our finite, ignorant, and limited humanity. That He chose such an interpreter, and placed him before men as the image of Himself in the Ideal Man, Jesus of Nazareth, in whom His inspiration was not limited to stray gleams as in us, but poured in a full flood of sunshine. I do not say that God has not expressed Himself in others beside Jesus. On the contrary, He has, I believe, chosen other forms and types of men to appeal to peoples and races to whom this ideal might not have appealed so powerfully.

But for *us*, for modern civilised humanity, I hold that there is not, and cannot be, a higher revelation of the Godhead than we have in this man of men, our elder Brother, type of Eternal Sonship.

No other theory seems to me to account for the astounding facts which surround the life of Christ and the spread of Christianity in the world.

No mere Galilean peasant, however in advance of his time, however highly gifted in spirit, though his importance and influence on his own

race might have been enormous, could ever have survived as a real living and stupendous power, as this life has done, to our day. Humanity needed a guide, an inspirer, an ideal, a link with God Himself; and the Father, loving and pitying us, gave us such a one, endowed as none other has ever been, with His own love, His own Charity, His own yearning pity and forgiveness of sins.

How else have the scattered sayings of a Gospel remembered, repeated, but not written down for a century, lasted till now, and now suffice for our highest faith and best rule of conduct? What other life stands perfect on the mountain top of Humanity, while we stumble on the slopes below and travel so painfully, so slowly up its steepnesses?

How could an ordinary man, even an extraordinarily gifted man, have been sufficient to inspire such passionate love, such devotion of heart and life which have availed to make martyrs triumphant under a cruel death; have led thousands to abandon ease, pleasure, home, safety, only for his dear sake, looking for no earthly reward?

"Ah," the advanced Unitarian says, "this is Christology, this is putting the man in the place which God alone should occupy."

In my mind the thought of God and the thought of Christ should exist together.

There may be some who have sufficient lofty spiritual insight to worship the abstract God, who has not left himself, I know, without a witness, even in those hearts who have never known Christ; but the "common people" who heard him gladly in Palestine so long ago, still need him *now* to bring them to their God, who has chosen this way to Him. The children need to have the image of God made clear, beautiful, and familiar to them by its reflection in that Jesus who forbade them not. We Unitarians need him preached and taught to-day if we are to do a real work in the world. What makes our services cold and dry? What drives the impressional, emotional, warm-hearted young people and the heavy-laden and sinful away from us? The eternal note of negation! Our sermons —to us so important a part of the service—are too many of them, coldly argumentative, destructive, controversial. We want *Christ* in them—the Ideal Man, the Eternal Son, the Leader, the Helper in these weary sinful, tossed, and doubting lives of ours. Not the supernatural, impossible God the Son, but the Son of God—son such as no other has ever been, but as every child of Humanity may try to be.

Tempted as we are, suffering as we suffer, mingling in every joy as in every sorrow; understanding, sympathising—not dead and gone, lost to us for ever, but in our midst, in our hearts; revealer of God to us, example, Friend, beloved, loving. I condemn none who hold different views. The Theist, yes, even the Atheist, may lead a Christ-like life. God may choose other ways to Him, for to Him all souls must tend who live at all, for all have the breath of His Spirit; but to *me* Christ is still the way, the truth, and the life. There are many, I believe, who feel as I do, who are debarred by conscientious motives from joining any orthodox church that limits salvation to any set of beliefs or any rites of worship, who yet crave for the warmth, the fellowship, the help which we cannot find except in Christ. If there are such, avowed Unitarians—yet often finding that the stone of negation is given to them instead of the bread for which they hunger, let them not be afraid to declare the faith that is in them.

It is often difficult to go against our brethren, even in believing *more* than they do, as it is in other churches to believe *less*; we value our liberty so much because we have bought it dear at the cost of much happiness, that we bind ourselves for its very sake. Yet if this Unitarianism, or as I should prefer to call it, simple, primitive Christianity, is to survive and be a real power for good, with a real definite message to the world, I think it is time that we restored Christ to the place which belongs to him, not being afraid to love—I will even say to adore—him in whom we see a perfect Manhood, a perfect Sonship, and an express and intelligible image of the Eternal Father. M.

Sin is a great public enemy, against whom no man can efficiently venture alone. One Englishman cannot fight a French army; one man cannot build a fort or drain a morass. It is not for each man to frame for himself a private salvation. Each man labours for and shares in a common salvation.

Our Lantern Services.

Many readers of the *Seed Sower* will probably have read the two articles on Lantern Services, from the pen of the Rev. J. J. Wright, which have appeared recently in *The Inquirer*. It may seem a little unnecessary to attempt to say anything more on the same subject, but with a most interesting experience fresh in my mind I cannot refuse the invitation of the editors to make it common property, in the hope that it may encourage others to go and do likewise. I can most fully corroborate all that Mr. Wright has said about this kind of service. It is certainly successful in attracting people who are seldom touched by ordinary religious agencies. It is capable of being used as a really effective instrument of religious teaching. Let me, however, come at once to our Warrington experiment, and try to tell, quite simply, what we did and how we succeeded. Oppressed with the thought of the crowds of people who throng our streets and flock into our public houses on Sunday evening, I opened my heart to my friends on the Chapel Committee, and told them what I wanted to do. As usual they said, "Go on and prosper," and backed up by a small guarantee fund we took a large hall in one of the poorest districts of the town for the four Sunday evenings in January. Willing workers were quickly found. Some promised to help with the music, others volunteered as stewards, a band of lads from the Sunday School distributed handbills from house to house; and most indispensable of all our friend, Mr. F. W. Monks, one of the best lanternists in the town, offered his lantern and services. Meanwhile it fell to my lot to study slides and catalogues, and find out where the best pictures could be found. The first evening came, and after our Chapel Service we walked down to the Hall, wondering whether we should have simply a handful of people or a crowd. Well, we had a crowd, the Hall was comfortably filled, not packed till there was not standing room left as on the subsequent evenings, but still a splendid congregation. At 8 o'clock the gas is lowered and we are ready to begin. And now I cannot do better than give a short outline of this first service. First of all the Chapel Choir sang a bright carol while a beautiful snow-scene was thrown upon the screen. Next, the opening hymn, "O God of Bethel, by whose hand," was sung, the words being shown by the lantern in large clear type that all could read. Then all joined in repeating the Lord's Prayer. A Bible lesson followed, illustrated by the two well-known pictures of the "Child Samuel," by James Sant and Sir Joshua Reynolds," and Holman Hunt's "Light of the World." The latter was left on the screen while a short and very beautiful solo was played on the violin. Then another hymn, "Nearer, my God, to Thee," and the people settled down to look at the beautiful series of pictures illustrating the life of Christ. As each picture appeared I said a few words about it, or repeated the appropriate texts from the Gospel. It was evidently a form of sermon that appealed powerfully to the religious feelings, and I have never spoken to a congregation more reverent and eager. That last word exactly expresses what I have felt at every service. There has been an eagerness about the people, which showed that religion had not lost all its freshness and interest for them. The hymn, "For ever with the Lord," sung with a great volume of sound, which was deeply moving to listen to, and the Benediction brought the service to a close. We went home that night knowing that our success was assured.

So great were the crowds that came to the other services, numbers not being able to get in at all, that we decided to continue them for six Sundays. Sometimes the "sermon" has taken the form of a modern story with appropriate pictures, or a poem, like Longfellow's "Excelsior," but we have always had some Biblical pictures as well, and a distinct religious impression has been kept in view. The adorable grandeur of the life of Christ, and the presence of God in the life of men to-day have been the two chief notes. If anybody is in doubt whether a lantern service can be truly reverent, I can only say, "Come and see." The other night when I was reading the Parable of the Prodigal Son you might almost have heard a pin drop, though the Hall was packed to suffocation, and I am not sure that I ever felt its matchless inspiration so deeply before.

Some will no doubt be anxious to know whether we succeeded in reaching the right class of people. Certainly we did. We had many of the church-goers as well, but there were small

gangs of young fellows innocent of the Sunday collar, and numbers of working men who did not look as though they often darkened the door of a church. Yes, we got the men, as well as the women! At the first service, two rough looking men were sitting at the back of the Hall, making little grunts of approval as the service proceeded, and at the end one said to the other, "I'll coom agin next Soonday." I have a warm place in my heart for that Lancashire lad though I don't know his name and may never see him again.

Let me bring these jottings to a close with a few practical hints to those who may be thinking of attempting similar work. Firstly, it is essential to use the best pictures. The people like them best, and are quick to feel their beauty and imaginative power. To awaken the spiritual imagination is one of the hardest tasks in the midst of the depressing conditions of our large towns. "I never saw anything so beautiful in all my life," a poor woman said to me after one of the services. Here is an effective way of making people, who are crowded into narrow homes and engaged in dreary toil, feel the beauty and charm of goodness, and opening their eyes to the mystery and delight of religion. Secondly: Really good music is a great help. Our services have owed a great deal to the fine solos that have been sung, and still more to the violin, which has helped to deepen the impression of one beautiful picture, specially singled out for the purpose, at every service. Thirdly: Most of the slides can be hired. The best thing to do is to go to the best large lantern depôt in the district and look carefully through all the likely slides kept in stock, making notes for future use of those which seem most appropriate. By all means also write to Messrs. Riley Bros., Godwin Street, Bradford, and to Mr. Tyler, 48 Waterloo Road, London, S.E., for their catalogues, price sixpence and and one shilling each respectively. Where the cost is not too great a difficulty, it is well to buy a few of the finest slides. They can be used again and again, and always help to give some dignity and beauty to the service if the hired slides are not quite as excellent as usual. Holman Hunt's "Light of the World," Sir Joshua Reynold's "Samuel" and "Group of Angel Heads," which may be had from Messrs. Newton, Fleet Street, London, and some of the best of Tyler's series of the "Life of Christ," serve admirably for this purpose. It is also a great convenience to have the hymns in the special large type, as made by Messrs. Riley. Fourthly: Organize well. Get as many people to work as possible. Their help will be needed as singers and stewards and bill distributors. A Lantern Service should be the expression of the corporate religious life of the Church. It is one way in which the Church may make its own faith and love minister to the life of the world. Those who put their hands to such an enterprise, in the fond hope that it will add members and increase the financial prosperity of their own place of worship, will probably be much disappointed with the result. True missionary work springs from a pure and unselfish love of souls, and must be carried on, not to satisfy personal ambitions, but to the glory of God alone.

WM. HAMILTON DRUMMOND.

Warrington,
February, 1896.

Old Love.

The broadsword loses its glitter
As it hangs in the ancient hall,
Rus'ed and blunt grows the keen-edged blade,
That once so gallant a champion made,
As it gleamed from the castle wall.

The jewel loses its lustre
As it lies in its velvet nest;
Till dull and dim is the good red gold,
That showed such a royal light of old,
As it flashed from a beauty's breast.

The blue eye loses its power
As age comes creeping on;
The fair form droops from its stately grace,
The roses fly from the care-worn face,
The charm from the trembling tone.

The colour fades from the canvas,
The magic from ringing rhyme;—
Now, is there a joy in this world of ours,
Riches, or glories, or hopes, or flowers,
But dies at the touch of Time?

Ay, Love in his pure serenity
Can the pitiless spell defy,
For tears cannot drown, nor absence dim,
And death itself may not conquer him,
For true love never can die.

Dress.

In endeavouring to form a Women's Dress Association, we were met on every side with the questions, "What do you hope to do?" and "What results can you expect?" Now, it is not easy to see the meaning underneath these remarks; they may either mean that the evil is so great and extensive that it is hopeless to try to remedy it, or that it is not of sufficient extent and importance to justify the trouble we are taking. But however this may be, it is quite certain that no effort for good was ever made without raising up an army of objectors, sometimes, it may be, consisting of those who do not care to share in the trouble and labour of reform. And beside the objections, we have received such numerous suggestions as may perhaps convince us that there *is* a field in which something may be done and some good effected. Our hopes of success may be said to be the same as apply to any other movement, of which *influence* must be the mainspring, and the example of the *few* an encouragement to the *many* to join them. Whether we like it or not, or think it wise or foolish, this is an age of combination and association, and we must not leave so powerful an engine in the hands of those who would use it for evil. Surely, if union be strength, and there is support in numbers, we were right in trying to form an association for regulating and directing women's minds on so important a subject as dress.

But we were met again with the remark, "There always have been foolish and extravagant fashions, and there always will be; they are not worse now than formerly." This, too, may be true, and we do not dispute it, for there is probably no new evil under the sun; but is it any *reason* why we should not try to counteract the folly and check the extravagance of the times we alone can influence, those in which we live? And, though we admit the truth as to the folly of fashions in former years, we do believe there is a sense in which the present evil is far greater, because it is so far more *widely spread.* The great-grandmothers of this generation did indeed pile up their heads and extend their hoops in a style that their descendants can never hope to rival, but it was limited to a comparatively small class of women, and the dress was worn chiefly, if not solely (in its full extent of preposterous extravagance), on going into society. What would have been thought then of any attempt at imitation by the factory girls or maid-servants? Herein lies the whole point and essence, as we believe, of the present evil,—viz., the influence of the upper classes on the lower, and the demoralisation of all kinds caused by the efforts of the poorer classes, down to the lowest, to dress in exactly the same style as those far above them. The nature of the materials employed, and their scarcity and costliness in former times, of course rendered such attempts impossible; and if the evil were now limited to those women who frequent the Court and move in the upper circles of society, we should be inclined to leave them alone, and say they were only injuring their own selves and must take the consequences.

But that this is far from being the case now, we think everyone will admit. Indeed, the magnitude of the evil is not denied; it rather seems to be accepted as an inevitable necessity as much as the existence of evil itself, and must therefore be acquiesced in. And it is *evil*, not merely bad taste or ugliness, and defiance of all acknowledged laws of beauty, that we are trying to combat, as we think we can show.

It is surely sinful to dress in such a manner as to injure or alter the body which God has so "wonderfully made;" it is as much as to say to Him that we could have made it better than He; and yet by how many of our customs we do this! Our waists are not slender enough, so we must make them smaller by our efforts at compression; our legs are not long enough, so we must add an inch or two to our heels, and by so doing alter and disturb the exquisite machinery (if we could but see it) of the muscles and tendons and veins of the leg, thus preventing that part of the foot which God *intended* to touch the ground from doing so.* Then again the colour of our hair does not please us, and we think we can improve or change it; and of all our efforts this does appear to be one of the most vain and senseless, the difference between the shades of colour attainable being so very trifling. Could we wish for or obtain scarlet or green or blue hair as a

* "If you raise the human heel above the level of the ball of the foot, it is clear that the whole of the natural gearing of the arch of the foot is disordered, the muscles of locomotion deranged, the strength of the limb lessened, and the balance of the erect human figure seriously interfered with."

variety, there might be some object and some excuse for our efforts. Our hair is not long or thick enough, so we must send out merchants all over the known world to search the huts and the cottages and the tents of the poor peasants for locks wherewith to add to our own, ay, and let us add to these localities, the hospitals also, where the sick and dead may be robbed for our benefit. Then the size of our bodies does not satisfy us (what a pity it seems that the sculptors of the Venuses of old did not know of our improved ideas of form and amendment of the human figure!), and so we add on lumps or humps of various dimensions, to increase our circumference.

And, again, we are not satisfied with the colour of our skin, so that must be modified by a covering of red or white, injurious, and even poisonous, though the process is known to be. We are ready enough to perceive the folly (even calling it wickedness) of the Chinese people who deform the feet of their women, so that they go all their life long as cripples; but does this custom differ in any way in principle, if in degree, from many of the habits to which I have alluded? I would ask, again, how do we distinguish between the practice of civilised nations in piercing the ears for the insertion of rings, and that of uncivilised tribes in piercing their noses or lips for the same purpose? It is surely only custom that can have reconciled us to habits so utterly barbarous in their nature.

There would be more sense in some of them if there were a standard of beauty placed before us, which we were desirous to attain to, and from which we lamented our departure; we might think we were doing a kindness to our neighbours by endeavouring to present ourselves as more pleasing objects, and by serving the general cause of good taste; but no such charitable supposition can account for our efforts in this line. And can we persist in saying that all this is harmless, even if foolish, and hurts none but those who practise it? When falsehood and deceit lie at the root of every one of these customs, can we believe that they are harmless, either morally or physically? Nothing can be harmless that injure; either body or mind, or is directly contrary to the laws which our Creator has, in nature, laid down for us.

L. TWINING.

The Society of the Blessed Encouragers.

This is a society founded in our town by the "Church of the Gentiles," with the object of training and stimulating people to be Encouragers. So many are ready to chant the Bad: shall there not be a league of those who will praise the Good? There are so many wet blankets in human life, critical, cynical, desponding, discouraging, that it is somebody's part to be music, sunshine, and hope. Few things are so helpful as open appreciation and generous praise. When Charles Kean went to America, the audiences in the theatres had not learned to applaud. They sat through a performance silent to the end, reserving their cheers for the fall of the curtain. Kean, unaware of this custom, was appalled at the silence and apparent coldness of his reception. Not a hand moved, not a voice was raised, and his heart went down into his boots. At the end of the first act he said to the manager, "If the pit keeps its hands in its pockets I shall break down." The manager went before the curtain, and explained to the audience that Mr. Kean unused to playing before critical and intelligent audiences like the Americans, found himself at a disadvantage, owing to the absence of those outward signs of appreciation common in more ignorant England! The audience took the hint, and Kean recovered his power as he was greeted with a round of cheering. Many people fail to do their best because the pit keeps its hands in its pockets! The pit may be fathers and mothers, or employers, or teachers, or overseers, or a congregation, but unless it recognises how much encouragement there is in a few words of praise, it will not get the best out of the actors.

So the "Society of Blessed Encouragers" binds each of its members to say something kind and cheerful and appreciative every day to *someone*. It believes that what a great many men and women supremely want is a good dose of praise. To let a man know that you recognise and rejoice in some good quality of his, is to bless him with new hope and stimulus. The first idea of the Society rose from a remark of our minister's one Sunday morning, who told us of what Gœthe makes Mephistopheles exclaim, "We are nothing if not critical." "And," said our minister, with a light in his eye, "the angels of light are

known by this—that they are nothing if not appreciative."

Charles Greatheart, our Senior Warden, reminded us of this at our annual church meeting, when he proposed that a Society of Encouragers be formed. He did not make a long speech, but he read to us an extract from Emerson and another from Crockett. Here they are. Emerson's is from the Essay on "Success":—"I have seen scores of people who can silence me, but I seek one who shall make me forget or overcome the frigidities and imbecilities into which I fall. The painter Giotto, Vasari tells us, renewed art because he put more goodness into his hands. To awake in men the sense of worth—that is the only aim. 'Tis cheap and easy to destroy. There is not a joyful boy or an innocent girl buoyant with fine purposes of duty, in all the street full of eager and rosy faces, but a cynic can chill and dishearten with a single word. Despondency comes readily enough to the most sanguine. The cynic has only to follow this hint with his bitter confirmation, and they check that eager, courageous pace, and go home with heavier step and premature age. . . . . This is easy, but to help the young soul, add energy, inspire hope, and blow the coals into a useful flame—that is not easy; that is the work of divine men."

Yes, and the divine men are the Encouragers!

The extract from Crockett will be found in that charming little story called "The Play Actress." Greatheart commended it to the meeting as one way of helping our ministers to preach good sermons. "The morning's duty for William Greig was not done till he came to put his warm, friendly hand into that of the minister, and to give him thanks for every good word spoken. For Grieg was one of those Encouragers who make the wheels of the world go round. More power be given to their elbows. Many a raw lad preaching his first or second sermon had been grateful for the hand-shake and the good-cheer; many a one had carried William Greig's voice with him in a corner of his memory, as William himself might carry a lamb in the nook of his plaidie. There was once, they say, a sad-voiced, disappointed probationer, who had preached in vacancies and as 'supply' for years which rose into two figures. He was so set up with a good word of William Greig, that he pulled himself together the following Sabbath day, and preached so stormily, that he took a congregation by assault, and got a call on the spot. He does not know it, but it was William Greig got him that call."

You will not be surprised that there was a marked improvement in our own minister's sermons after that meeting, for many who had never expressed a word of gratitude to him for years, took it into their heads to thank him for the good he had done them, so that he began to blossom again with a new spring. And as everybody took to praising instead of criticising, the work of the church went on with an ease and success quite amazing. The "Society of Blessed Encouragers" has now extended from our church to the town itself, where it promises large success.

I wonder how it would do to start branches in all our churches!

THE QUIET MEMBER.

Day and Night.

The day is Thine,—
The long bright summer day,
From the first dawning light till evening closes,
And all its merry birds and blooming roses,
And all its golden beauty bids us say,
The day, O Lord, is Thine.

And life's brief day,
Is also Thine, when we
Must work while light doth last for our dear Master,
O that our sluggish feet could travel faster,
And we with readier service give to Thee
Our life's fast-fleeting day!

The night is Thine,—
The long dark winter's night,
Hushing our birds to sleep, our flowers concealing;
But, by its hosts of glowing stars, revealing
Through the deep sky, Thy glory and Thy might.
The night, O Lord, is Thine.

That darker night
Is also Thine, O Lord,
When Thou sweet sleep to Thy beloved givest;
For while they needs must die, Thou ever livest,
And o'er Thy dear ones keepest watch and ward,
Till darkness ends in light.

C. E. M.

Character, like a tree, is not added to passively from without: it grows from within.

Occasional Notes.

Mr. Tate's noble benefactions to our two colleges—£5,000 each—have been given in wise thoughtfulness, with the very definite object of instructing our future ministers in the art and method of preaching. Unfortunately, the Unitarian pulpit is not distinguished by preaching power. Our ministers are thoughtful, scholarly, refined, but, as a rule, they have little grip on the hearts of men, and do not know how to "lift" an audience or a congregation. It is almost to be wished that our students could be treated as it is said Mr. Spurgeon treated his—turn them out on Sunday evenings to preach under the first lamp-post. Cobden, once asked the secret of his remarkable debating power, replied that it was due to a long course of open-air stump oratory as the evangelist of Free Trade. No doubt the best kind of speaking power is a natural gift; but a very effective speaking power can be cultivated. Yet, it must be remembered, no amount of cultivation will turn a dull mind into an interesting preacher. We shall be expecting too much from Mr. Tate's generous gifts if we think that all the students who leave our colleges in the future will be eloquent, persuasive, interesting, and popular orators.

We trust our college authorities will carefully consider how to make the best use of Mr. Tate's splendid gift. The art of preaching is not an easy thing to teach—least of all can it be taught by the dull, spiritless methods of the regulation sermon class. The correct, logical, tedious essay which meets with the approval of most college authorities is the abomination of desolation! Above all, deliver us from a professor of homiletics! Let us have the best of living preachers to discourse to us from time to time. And a word in your ears, O college committees! Let us sometimes forsake our ministers, and secure the services of a first-rate barrister or politician to tell us how to speak with freedom, grace, spirit, and spontaneity.

We have lately been collecting and collating various replies to those questions of perennial interest,—Why do we not succeed? Why do not our churches flourish? Why are we so sterile? Here are some of the results of our enquiries:—

Because our services are too dull and Puritanical.

Because we are beginning to imitate the Ritualists with our surpliced choirs, etc.

Because our sermons do not appeal to thoughtful, educated men.

Because our sermons are over the heads of our hearers.

Because our organisation is not elastic enough.

Because our freedom of organisation lends itself so easily to vagaries and eccentricities.

Because our methods too slavishly follow those of orthodox churches.

Because we are smitten with the idea that our mission is to reconstruct the Christian Church *de novo*.

Because we are too lively.

Because we are too dull.

Because our ministers do not visit.

Because our ministers spend their time gossipping around, instead of working in their studies.

We shall be glad to hear from any one who can discover some kind of consistency in these various answers.

The elementary education question will soon be before Parliament in the shape of a Government Bill. Let our friends be up and stirring. Every congregation ought to have its meeting and send to the Government and to the representative of the district in the House of Commons a strongly worded resolution to the effect that there must be no increase of grants to denominational schools without full control by the local authority.

"Refuse old wive's fables," said an apostle. Alas! old wives may often stand for old churches.

A basely selfish man is chargeable with neglect of himself. He has a diseased self and infects the neighbourhood. This is his fault, that he has not cared aright for self.

THE CHILDREN'S PAGE.

The Little Maiden.

There was a little maiden,
She was not six years old;
Blue were her eyes as summer skies,
Her hair like burnish'd gold;
She took her wicker basket,
With rosy ribbon twined,
And little Jane ran down the lane
Wild strawberries to find.

There was a wicked gipsy,
She met her in the glade;
She said "Come here, my pretty dear,
Oh, never be afraid!
I'll give you sugar-candy
And cakes and comfits sweet;
Oh, come with me and you shall see
A most delightful treat."

Alas! that little maiden
Believed each pleasant word,
She did not know of crime or woe,
Of falsehood, had not heard;
Her peaceful life was stranger
To the very name of sin,
For love and truth did guard her youth,
Her happy home within.

She look'd up at the gipsy,
With such a merry smile,
Her pretty eyes with glad surprise
Are shining all the while;
Her tiny rosy fingers
In that brown hand she laid;
They run so fast—they stop at last,
Alas! poor little maid!

The wicked gipsy led her
Into the dismal wood;
She took away her garments gay,
Her scarlet cloak and hood;
But when in rags and tatters
Her tender form was drest,
The little maid was not afraid,
She thought it was a jest.

And now the sun is setting
'Mid clouds of rosy light,
Soft shadows pass o'er moss and grass,
Where dew drops glitter bright;
She kneels before the gipsy
And bends her pretty head,
With childish grace and sweet grave face,
"I'll say my prayers," she said.

Her small hands clasp together,
She whisper'd soft and mild,
"Pray God bless both my parents,
And make me a good child.
And bless this dear old woman,
For very kind is she;
I'll take her home, if she will come,
Pray God bless her and me.

Ah, when the gipsy saw her,
And heard her childish prayer,
Big tears arise into her eyes,
Unwonted dwellers there.
She felt that she was sorry,
And with the sorrow came
Repentance true—as it must do—
And with repentance, shame.

The little maiden kiss'd her,
And then fell fast asleep;
Like twilight rose, her eyelids close,
Open they could not keep.
The gipsy raised her gently;
With weariness and pain,
She set her face back to retrace
Her wicked steps again.

To that dear home she bore her,
Where mourners watch'd all night,
And still she slept while others wept
With rapture and delight.
In her deserted nursery,
Upon her own white bed,
They softly laid that little maid,
And prayers above her said.

Ah, children! little children!
Your innocence hath power;
The gipsy left the paths of theft
From that eventful hour.
Repentance for past errors,
She toil'd with honest care;
Ah, well she might bless day and night
The little maiden's prayer!

The young grow by that which they are intended to outgrow—fairy tales, games, illusions about their parents' perfect goodness and wisdom. So the world has grown in religion by that which it was intended to outgrow,—beliefs in miracles, infallibility, supernatural intervention, these have once played a useful part, but are now left behind like children's games.

News from the Field.

MIDLAND SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION.—*Stourbridge District Union.*—The first meeting of this newly-formed Union took place on Saturday, February 15th, at the New Meeting Schools, Kidderminster. The Revs. A. W. Timmis, E. D. Priestley Evans, E. P. Hall, I. Wrigley, and C. D. Badland were present, with a good muster of teachers and friends from Netherend, Lye, Stourbridge, and Kidderminster. After justice had been done to the excellent tea provided by the Kidderminster ladies, the Rev. A. W. Timmis took the chair as the first President of the Union, and expressed his wishes for its success. He was supported by the other ministers present, and by Mr. F. Taylor (Stourbridge). Later in the evening the President addressed the meeting on "Teachers' Notes," and gave an account of the plan he has adopted in the Stourbridge Sunday School. He mentioned the difficulties commonly experienced in giving systematic Biblical instruction in our Sunday Schools. To meet these he is at present giving an address each Sunday afternoon to the whole school—at the close of the usual lesson—on a selected Biblical subject. Notes of this address are given to each teacher, and it is hoped they will use the notes the following Sunday to review the previous week's address, either adding to it or simplifying it, as the requirements of the class demand. Considerable interest was roused by the President's suggestion, and questions were asked. It was suggested that a system of uniform lessons might be adopted throughout the Union, and prizes distributed at the Whit-Monday meeting, the proposal being favourably received by the meeting. During the evening a varied musical programme added to the enjoyment of the visitors. Special thanks are due to Miss Badland for her valuable aid as accompanist, and the new Union is to be congratulated on the success of its first meeting. There will be a united service for the scholars of the four schools in the Union on Whit-Monday, in the Stourbridge chapel.

PROTESTANT DISSENTING MINISTERS' MONTHLY MEETING.—The annual meeting was held at the Old Meeting Church, Birmingham, on Monday, February 17th. At the conclusion of the business, the Rev. Henry Gow, B.A., of Leicester, read a paper on the question, "Is any doctrinal statement of our position possible?" The Revs. C. Badland, Lummis, E. P. Hall, Grey, Wood, and others took part in the discussion. After the meeting the members were entertained at tea by the senior warden of the Old Meeting. Several ministers' wives were also present.

BIRMINGHAM (*Church of the Messiah*).—The annual meeting and soiree of the congregation of the Church of the Messiah was held on Monday evening, February 10th. The meeting was held in the church, under the chairmanship of Mr. Priestley Smith, and amongst those present were the Rev. L. P. Jacks and Mrs. Jacks; Alderman Kenrick, M.P., and Mrs. Kenrick; Mr. Percy Crosskey and Mr. Russell Jolly (wardens); Mr. Herbert New (treasurer): Mr. C. G. Beale and Mrs. Beale; Mr. J. A. Kenrick, Mr. G. H. Kenrick, Dr. J. W. Russell, Dr. Poynting, Mrs. F. Ryland, Miss Gittins, Mrs. Duncan, The Misses Chamberlain; Messrs. Howard Smith, Hendricks, C. Isaacs, T. W. Ryland, Covington, E. H. Lee, T. H. Russell, W. B. Kenrick, and A. Kenrick.—The Vestry Committee, in their annual report, which the chairman read, said that last year they recorded the invitation to the Rev. L. P. Jacks to become the minister of the church, his acceptance, and his entry on his work amongst them; and in connection with those events they expressed, on behalf of the congregation, a sense of deep satisfaction and hopefulness. The year which had passed since then had more than justified that feeling. It had been a rekindling of enthusiasm in the congregation, an increasing attendance at the services, and a welcome addition to the number of seat-holders. It had confirmed their belief in the power and devotion of their minister, and it had made strong and permanent the warm feelings with which they welcomed Mr. and Mrs. Jacks. The various institutions connected with the church had all continued their useful work with energy and success. The treasurer's accounts of the previous year showed that an increase of about £100 per annum must be made to the regular income of the church before the finances could be considered satisfactory, and that was emphasised by this year's balance-sheet. Little more than two years ago the congregation was labouring under a sense of a recent heavy loss, and of anxiety as to the future. The memories which surrounded the long period of Dr. Crosskey's ministry remained with them, and would always remain with those who knew him there. But the anxiety as to the future of the church was over; the feeling which now prevailed was, they believed, one of renewed life and energy.—The treasurer's statement of accounts showed an income of £1039 11s. 4d., and a deficiency of £77 17s. 2d. —The Chairman moved the reception and adoption of these reports, which he described as very encouraging. Mr. Beale seconded, and the reports were adopted unanimously.—Alderman Kenrick, M.P., moved a resolution thanking Mr. Jacks for his devoted and ceaseless labours in connection with the church and its various institutions during the past year, and hoping that the feelings of estimation and affection, which already existed between the congregation and the minister, might be strengthened every year. The motion was seconded by Miss Gittins, and carried with unanimity.—In response, Mr. Jacks said he felt convinced that they had moved and were moving, and that their movement was in the right direction. The institutions of the church were a most eloquent monument to Dr. Crosskey's memory, and he was sure he would not be thought to overlook the labours of others who were concerned in them when he spoke of those institutions as a rich inheritance bequeathed by Dr. Crosskey to his successor. Their present prosperity was largely due to the wisdom of his designing mind; and, when they recollected the deep interest that he took in their welfare, it was doubly pleasant to them that, while not one of them had languished, nearly all of them had grown. They had now arrived at that highly-stimulating moment in their history when the cry of "No more room" was beginning to make itself heard—(hear, hear) —and not only did the old institutions continue to develop, but one or two new ones had appeared on the

scene—(applause). He expressed his thanks for the heartiness with which the resolution had been passed.—Mr. Hendriks moved a vote of thanks to the treasurer, wardens, and vestry committee for their services during the past year, and requesting Mr. New to retain the office of treasurer during the ensuing year. Mr. L. Hughes seconded, and this also was adopted, Mr. New complying with the request.—On the motion of Mr. Russell Jolly, seconded by Mr. Blumfield, Mr. T. N. Tait was elected warden for the next two years.—The chairman was thanked for his services, and then those present proceeded to the congregational room, where a concert of vocal and instrumental music was given by Miss F. Howle, Messrs. A. J. Bennett, J. R. Cash, E. Garbutt, and A. Woolley. Mr. Rickett gave an organ recital, and there were also a number of scientific exhibits.

BIRMINGHAM (*Hurst Street Mission*).—The annual sermons were preached by the Rev. L. P. Jacks, M.A., at the Church of The Messiah, on Sunday, February 16th. The annual meeting was held at the Mission Hall, Hurst Street, on Monday evening, February 17th. Mr. Howard Smith presided, and there were also on the platform Messrs. W. J. Clarke, F. S. Bolton, and W. H. B. Ryland. There was a good attendance.—The fifty-sixth annual report of the committee stated that the work of the mission during the past year had been carried on energetically and successfully under the direction of the missionary, Mr. W. J. Clarke. Details were given of the religious, educational, and philanthropic work carried on, and it was pointed out that the philanthropic work had been extraordinarily heavy, owing to the distress among the poor, caused partly by lack of employment and partly by the abnormally cold weather experienced in January and February. The number and variety of the objects embraced among the mission agencies included children's Sunday-schools, Sunday morning and afternoon adult classes, regular Sunday and special religious services, week-day classes for chemistry, physiography, botany, vocal and instrumental music, English literature, Biblical and Shakesperean studies, dress-cutting, mothers' meetings, recreation room, social gatherings, library, provident institution and savings club, advice bureau, daily visits to and from the poor, and the daily disbursement among them of necessary and suitable relief. The Children's Clothing Association still remained in active operation, and more than 3,000 children were last year clothed by the association. A legacy of £467 had been received by the mission, and an effort was made by Mr. Clarke to extinguish the balance of debt on the general income and expenditure and building fund accounts which remained. Owing to the liberal response made to his appeal, this effort was successful. The treasurer's statement showed that the year was started with an adverse balance of £362, but it finished with a balance in hand of £40, the total income having been £1,201.—Mr. Clarke presented a report showing that the amount received for the relief of distress had been £603, of which £86 remained in hand. He also read a long account dealing with the various mission services.—The reports were adopted, and during the evening the choir sang several selections.

BIRMINGHAM (*The Old Meeting Church*). — The annual congregation meeting was held on Monday evening, January 20th, under the presidency of the senior warden (Mr. Charles Harding). There were present, among others, the Rev. J. Wood and Mrs. Wood, Mr. T. F. Woodley (junior warden), Mr. Allen Edwards (treasurer), Mr. Madders, Mr. R. Peyton, General Phelps, Mr. E. Martineau, Mr. Innes, Mr. Forrester, Mr. Townley, Mr. E. L. Tyndall, etc. The room was handsomely decorated for the occasion, and before the business meeting tea was served and a short concert held under the direction of the organist, Mr. A. J. Cotton. The committee's report and treasurer's statement of accounts were read and adopted, together with the reports of the Sunday School, Domestic Mission, Benevolent Society, Social Union, Guild of Kindness, Mothers' Meeting, Medical Club, etc. The various accounts showed that for all purposes a sum of £1,560 had been raised during the year. Mr. Allen Edwards was re-appointed treasurer, and Mr. Madders was appointed junior warden. In the course of the evening Mr. Wood gave an address on "Cohesion—the need of our Churches."

LEAMINGTON.—The Rev. B. K. Grey has arranged for the delivery of three theological lectures at Leamington. The first of these, on "The idea of God as affected by modern thought," was given on Monday evening, February 17th, in the Pump Room, by the Rev. Joseph Wood, of Birmingham. There were forty persons present. It is hoped these lectures may be the beginning of good things in Leamington.

LYE.—A special service, in memory of Mrs. Worthington, was held here on Sunday evening, February 16th. There was a very good attendance, and all listened with great attention whilst the minister spoke of the great loss that not only Stourbridge but the whole district had sustained.—On Monday, February 17th, the annual congregational tea meeting was held in the school room. After tea speeches were made by the Rev. I. Wrigley and Messrs. J. Pardoe, R. Perry, E. Eveson, and F. Wassell. Mr. J. Pardoe mentioned that the Rev. Jas. Scott began services in the Lye in the year 1788, and yet no centenary services had yet been held. A long programme, consisting of readings and songs, was then gone through, Mr. Joseph Pardoe being accompanist. The evening was thoroughly enjoyed by those present.

WHITCHURCH (SALOP).—Nineteen memorial brasses have been transferred from the Presbyterian Chapel at Dodington, now used as a school, to the Church of the Saviour. Many of these tablets were rescued from the old chapel, which was burnt by rioters in 1791, and were placed in the new building erected by Government as compensation, where divine worship was conducted till 1844. Four brasses which had been removed previously, were transferred to the Church of the Saviour in 1894. The series of 23 commemorates 41 lives, extending from 1672 to 1836. The persons commemorated include several ministers and a Vice-Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.